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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
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RULGPIA/USCOMSOLANT

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000271

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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, I/GWHA, WHA, WHA/PDA, WHA/BSC,  
WHA/EPSC  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; AFTERMATH OF THE RECENT VISITS OF AG  
GONZALES, U/S BURNS AND A/S SHANNON; SPAT OVER ETON PARK,  
KIRCHNER-CHAVEZ; 02/12/07

## 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Most dailies report positively on the visit of U/S Burns and A/S Shannon, particularly for playing down the controversy over Ambassador Wayne's intercession on behalf of Eton Park over Transener, for stating the Bush administration's categorical support for Argentina's investigation of the AMIA case and for praising Argentina's nuclear cooperation. Post-visit comments on AG Gonzales reflect the GOA's position on the issue of torture.

## 2. OPINION PIECES

### - "GOA Agrees to Leave Behind U.S. Controversy"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" (02/10) says "The GOA and the U.S. agreed to overcome differences over U.S. energy fund Eton Park, whose access to the Argentine energy market had been vetoed by the GOA.

"Despite the friendly words of both parties, Planning Minister De Vido confirmed the GOA's opposition to the purchase... (Nevertheless) the tense atmosphere changed after yesterday's meetings.

"U/S Burns, who headed U.S. delegation meetings with Cabinet Chief Fernandez, Foreign Minister Taiana and Minister De Vido assured 'We agreed it was a complete misunderstanding, and decided to leave it behind us.' President Kirchner's greeting of the visitors was viewed as a sign of rapprochement...."

### - "Caress and a Slap on the Face"

Fernando Gonzalez, leading Clarin political editor, opines (02/10) "Few images are as eloquent as yesterday's to assess today's links between both countries. A smiling President Kirchner entered the room where Nicholas Burns discussed with Cabinet Chief Fernandez the decision which left a U.S. energy fund definitively out of business. A caress and a slap on the face. This is the way in which Kirchner consolidates his relations with the U.S. The President smiles and doesn't want to be too distant from the world's leading power. But, above all and particularly in an election year, he doesn't want to suffer the consequences of appearing too close to George W. Bush's negative image."

### - "Despite Differences, U.S. Launches a Conciliatory Diplomatic Offensive"

Gustavo Sierra, leading "Clarín" international analyst, comments (02/10) "During his 24 hours in Argentina, Nicholas Burns reiterated words that downplayed several differences. The controversy over a

U.S. energy fund was a 'complete misunderstanding'. The general relationship with the country 'must leave behind past misunderstandings'. Regarding Venezuela, 'we don't want any more misunderstandings'. The general tone was conciliatory, seeking to avoid controversy, and full of praise for the Kirchner administration. If this visit, together with Shannon's, were used to measure the state of relations between Washington and Buenos Aires we might say there has been remarkable improvement, and that they can become even more important.

"In less than two days, three important men of the Bush administration arrived in Buenos Aires. On Wednesday, there was the arrival of AG Gonzalez (a key White House element to justify Guantanamo), who had several meetings with GOA officials, though very discreetly, given his personality and the Embassy's reluctance to expose him to criticism), and Thursday evening, Burns and Shannon, displayed a real diplomatic offensive by a government that had only focused on Iraq.

".... 'We want to beef-up and reinforce bilateral relations,' underscored Burns, who said he had invited Ministers Taiana and De Vido to visit Washington in the next weeks. And added Argentina is the most important U.S. partner in the region on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation... Also, at a CARI speech and during a press round table at the Embassy, he said Argentina is a bridge in Washington's relations with Bolivia and Ecuador... However, he left Venezuela out of the equation... and noting that 'Venezuela poses no danger to the U.S., but to the rest of the region'.

- "Consequences of Transener Case: GOA Says Differences with U.S. Are Over"

Leading "Clarín" (02/11) quotes Cabinet Chief Fernandez who, seeking to end the Transener issue, and putting it totally behind, said "'We understood each other and everything is clear'. He added there was understanding from both sides and that 'we believe a genuine

explanation was given". He also referred to the Burns-Shannon visit, saying 'bilateral relations are very good, cordial and correct', and that Kirchner achieved a 'mature relationship, with some points on which there's agreement and other's where there's not.'

"....Fernandez made clear that the U.S. Embassy had only acted in defense of its companies, but also expressed concern for the way in which the problem was made public...."

- "Kirchner wants to do More Business with Chavez"

Mariano Obarrio, daily-of-record "La Nación" political and diplomatic writer, says (02/11) "Kirchner will travel to Caracas on February 21 to negotiate with Chavez the purchase by Venezuela of a new series of Argentine bonds for up to 2 billion dollars, viewed by La Nación as a political gesture of support of the Bolivarian leader. The GOA, for its part, will announce a joint oil investment in the Orinoco, in addition to speeding up the announced - but never implemented -- rescue of Sancor Milk Company, and the delayed project to build Venezuelan ships...."

- "With Eyes Set on Washington and Paris"

Eduardo Van der Kooy, leading "Clarín" political columnist, opines (02/11) "Amid differences and dtente, this is how Argentina has been developing its relations with Washington. Kirchner no longer believes rapprochement with Bush is possible. And perhaps the U.S. leader thinks the same. The good personal chemistry between them disappeared, but this vacuum is being replaced on both sides by intense diplomatic moves.

"....(In the wake of Bush's planned trip to the region) Argentina is facing an election year and Bush's presence here, in the global context, would be uncomfortable for Kirchner. On the other hand, there was neither an official or-unofficial request from Buenos Aires or Washington for the U.S. president to even evaluate a visit to Argentina.

".... Kirchner understood that, whether with Republicans or Democrats, the GOA had to reestablish a sensible relationship with

the U.S., even with second-level officials. And one of the gestures that re-vamped the battered relationship was Kirchner's political support for the AMIA probe.

Van der Kooy also praises Amb. Wayne's active and positive performance despite the 'inopportune' Eton Park letter, but noted the GOA's efforts aimed at downplaying differences, in its meetings with Burns, Shannon and even AG Gonzales over the issue of torture...."

- "Kirchner is No Longer the Same with Washington"

Political analyst Morales Sola in daily-of-record "La Nacion" (02/11) notes that "Burns is the first high-ranking international official to point out Kirchner is completely different from Chavez... Kirchner's hostility towards the Bush administration, which began in the Summit and continued up to June 2006 when he complained of the U.S. in his visit to Spain, began to change after his last trip to New York in September, when even the Democrats gave him a cold shoulder. According to reliable sources, since then Kirchner ordered SIDE to intensify its cooperation with U.S. intelligence services, on terrorism, money laundering, drug-trafficking and common crime. But Kirchner's decision to support the AMIA investigation was what dramatically changed bilateral relations with Washington. Argentina's tension with Iran takes place at the worst moment of U.S.-Iran relations, and the conclusion of the Argentine prosecutors is, so far, the only concrete evidence in the world that Iran is a State linked with terrorism...."

- "Pros and Cons"

Political columnist Horacio Verbitsky writes in leftist Pagina 12 (02/12) "The cordiality with which Cabinet chief Fernandez received Burns and Shannon and President Kirchner's welcome marks a difference from the GOA's attitude vis-à-vis AG Gonzales: the MFA suggested he be received by his counterparts only, and not by Kirchner, given his position on the issue of torture in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib...."

- "Agreement with the U.S. to Keep Iran in Check"

Daily-of-record La Nacion says (02/11) The Kirchner administration agreed with the two State Department envoys that both countries will strengthen their joint policies aimed at promoting nuclear non-proliferation, and that they will prevent Iran from moving

forward in that strategic U.S. issue.

"Reliable Government House sources confirmed that this issue was thoroughly discussed at Friday's meetings, and both U.S. officials were particularly interested in the matter.

"This is no minor issue, because Iran is a strategic ally of Venezuela's, and President Chavez, is Kirchner's partner on energy and finance projects, and trade and business deals.

".... Burns said 'Argentina is the strongest partner in the region on the issues of non-proliferation and terrorism. These issues are in the heart of U.S. foreign policy, and are of enormous interest to us'. Given his emphasis, Argentina's commitment was one of the mission's goals in Buenos Aires. And he underscored that Argentina, together with the U.S. is leader in non-proliferation and in issues connected with Iran' at the IAEA...."

- "Washington's 'Realistic' U-turn for the Region"

Eduardo Amadeo writes in business-financial, center-right "BAE" (02/12) "The visit of two high-ranking USG officials represents a U-turn in its recent 'back-yard' policy.

"During the first years of his administration, Bush's policy for the region was anything but successful... Noriega repeated again and again the same mistakes... and it wasn't surprising for the State Department's relationship with Latin American leaders to range from confrontation to coldness, a situation which Chavez used in his favor.

".... When Shannon took over as A/S he said, regarding Evo in Bolivia, 'we've already made enough mistakes in the past. Today, our opinion on Bolivia may be counterproductive: so better not harass Evo'. This positive change was made clear during the recent visit of Burns and Shannon.

".... To the surprise of many, they insisted on respect for differences, non intervention on sovereign decisions and the role of regional leaders seeking solutions to key issues, such as Bolivia and Ecuador.

"Both U.S. officials made their best efforts in minimizing any difference with Kirchner and remarked the existence of common adversaries. Finally, they proposed positive topics, such as the joint development of bio-fuels.

"This U-turn in the State Department's policy for the region...is nothing but realistic for a Latin America that is a complex ideological mosaic with highly conflictive societies...."

- "U.S. Cynicism in Last Visit to Kirchner"

Business-financial "Ambito Financiero" (02/12) runs a critical front-page editorial on U/S Burns' CARI speech which says "The audience of businessmen, politicians and diplomats invited by the U.S. delegation visiting the country came out more confused after this meeting. The only thing that was clear to them was the excessive U.S. zeal in praising Kirchner's human rights policy. Argentina was only recognized for two meritorious things: having come out of a dictatorship and for opening its markets, two actions that cannot be attributed to this government. And, on top of all, recent misunderstandings were minimized, while they praised bilateral ties with Brazil, (which was either due to lack of knowledge, given they were in Argentina - or cynicism.)"

### 13. EDITORIALS

- "Terrorism, Crime Against Humanity"

An editorial in daily-of-record "La Nacion" (02/11)... criticizes the Argentine Supreme Court for refusing to extradite ETA terrorist Lariz Iriondo to Spain. This was a serious historic mistake because not only States, but also individuals may commit crimes against Humanity. Crimes are against Humanity due to the type of the crime or the nature of the victims, not whether they involve a State or not. This is why those responsible for murdering or injuring innocent civilians due to domestic armed conflicts should be held responsible for what they did, like the rest of us.

".... Most recently, on the AMIA case, Judge Canicoba Corral considered the terrorist attack a crime against Humanity, and therefore, doesn't prescribe. This decision must be considered a step forward... though the ruling poses doubt on the interpretation, because it refers to the State of Iran.

".... In order for States to be able to fight against terrorism it's necessary to avoid interpretations that will exonerate those who flagrantly violated human rights."

- "Summer Storm"

An editorial in independent "La Prensa" (Sunday, p. 19) says "The incident with the USG over the sale of Transener was rapidly solved via diplomacy. In an effort to dispel the clouds in bilateral relations, the U.S. officials visiting Argentina said it had been a 'misunderstanding and, after meeting with President Kirchner hailed bilateral relations, as they referred to Argentina as regional leaders on the issue of human rights and the fight against terrorism. This is perhaps an exaggerated but efficient way of putting an end to the incident...."

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